



LINCOLN REPORT:

ARKANSAS VETERANS FACE INCREASED CHALLENGES ACCESSING HEALTH CARE

A report compiled by U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln's office and released today shows that most Arkansas veterans live in rural areas and are underserved by a Veterans Administration that is strapped for cash and coping with an increasing veterans claim backlog.

Arkansas's rural veterans face barriers to accessing timely and quality health care and a shortage of providers in rural areas, particularly mental health and specialty providers. Insufficient funding of VA health care and the VA claims backlog have compounded the problem.

As Lincoln's report shows, many veterans in Arkansas must travel more than 90 miles (180 miles roundtrip) to receive care. These veterans currently pay approximately \$2.50 per gallon of gasoline in addition to other transportation costs including the costs of lodging, meals, and time off work.

VA Medical Centers and Clinics in Arkansas

Currently, the Veterans Administration (VA) has three VA Medical Centers in Arkansas:

- The John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital in Little Rock
- The Eugene J. Towbin Health Care Center in North Little Rock
- The Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks in Fayetteville

In addition, Arkansas is home to 10 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics located in El Dorado, Fort Smith, Harrison, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Mena, Mountain Home, Paragould, Pine Bluff, and Texarkana.

Total State Veteran Population

| Veteran Population | Total Population | Percent of Population |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 257,627 | 2,855,390 | 9% |

Central Arkansas

More than 56,000 veterans reside in Central Arkansas. This area includes two VA Medical Centers, the John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital in Little Rock and the Eugene J. Towbin Healthcare Center in North Little Rock. These two medical centers reported more than 10,500 inpatient admissions in 2008.

For example, a veteran in Perryville (Perry County) travels 40 miles to receive care at the VA Medical Center in Little Rock (\$11.50 roundtrip*). This veteran used to receive \$22.80 to compensate him for his travel. Under legislation supported by Senator Lincoln, a disabled veteran would receive \$33.20 in compensation.

| County | Veteran Population | Total Population (2006 Census) | Percent of Population |
|----------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Conway | 1,814 | 20,694 | 8.8 |
| Faulkner | 8,268 | 100,685 | 8.2 |
| Perry | 1,134 | 10,411 | 10.9 |
| Pulaski | 34,437 | 367,319 | 9.4 |
| Saline | 10,551 | 94,024 | 11.2 |

* These transportation costs reflect cost of fuel but do not include the costs of lodging, meals, or time off work.

Southeast Arkansas

More than 30,000 veterans reside in the Southeast region of the state. This area includes only one Community-Based Outpatient Clinic to service veterans in Pine Bluff. Veterans in this region of the state often travel to the VA Medical Center in Memphis to receive care.

For example, a veteran in Dumas (Desha County) travels 40 miles to receive care at the Pine Bluff CBOC (\$10 roundtrip*). For more intensive care, this veteran could travel 155 miles to Memphis VA Medical Center (more than \$40 roundtrip*). This veteran used to receive \$22.80 to compensate for his travel to the Pine Bluff Clinic and \$88.35 to compensate for his travel to Memphis. Under legislation supported by Senator Lincoln, a disabled veteran would receive \$33.20 in compensation for travel to Pine Bluff and \$128.65 in compensation for travel to Memphis.

| County | Veteran Population | Total Population (2006 Census) | % of Population |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Arkansas | 1,387 | 19,884 | 7.0 |
| Ashley | 1,841 | 22,843 | 8 |
| Bradley | 1,143 | 12,111 | 9.4 |
| Chicot | 797 | 12,915 | 6.2 |
| Cleveland | 793 | 8,858 | 9.0 |

| | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------|------|
| Desha | 953 | 14,181 | 6.7 |
| Drew | 1,830 | 18,387 | 10.0 |
| Jefferson | 7,423 | 80,655 | 9.2 |
| Lee | 862 | 11,379 | 7.6 |
| Lincoln | 1,306 | 14,125 | 9.2 |
| Lonoke | 6,776 | 62,902 | 10.8 |
| Monroe | 1,143 | 9,095 | 12.6 |
| Phillips | 1,357 | 23,331 | 5.8 |
| Prairie | 932 | 8,927 | 10.4 |
| St. Francis | 1,998 | 27,535 | 7.3 |

* These transportation costs reflect cost of fuel but do not include the costs of lodging, meals, or time off work.

Southwest Arkansas

More than 40,000 veterans reside in the Southwest region of the state. This area includes four Community-Based Outpatient Centers in Mena, Hot Springs, Texarkana, and El Dorado.

For example, a veteran in Prescott (Nevada County) travels 45 miles to receive care at the Texarkana CBOC (\$12.25 roundtrip*). This veteran is more than 90 miles away from a VA Medical Center in Central Arkansas (\$25 roundtrip*). This veteran used to receive \$25.65 to compensate for his travel to the Texarkana Clinic and \$51.30 to compensate for his travel to Central Arkansas. Under legislation supported by Senator Lincoln, a disabled veteran would receive \$37.35 in compensation for travel to Texarkana and \$74.70 in compensation for travel to Central Arkansas.

| County | Veteran Population | Total Population (2006 Census) | % of Population |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Calhoun | 543 | 5,558 | 9.7 |
| Clark | 1,571 | 22,913 | 6.9 |
| Columbia | 1,771 | 24,440 | 7.2 |
| Dallas | 646 | 8,350 | 7.7 |
| Garland | 10,327 | 95,164 | 10.9 |
| Grant | 1,708 | 17,493 | 9.8 |
| Hemsptead | 1,562 | 23,347 | 6.7 |
| Hot Springs | 3,479 | 31,730 | 11 |
| Howard | 1,073 | 14,415 | 7.4 |
| Lafayette | 706 | 7,896 | 8.9 |
| Little River | 996 | 13,074 | 7.6 |
| Miller | 4,033 | 43,055 | 9.4 |
| Montgomery | 686 | 9,272 | 7.4 |
| Nevada | 869 | 9,471 | 9.2 |
| Ouachita | 2,705 | 26,710 | 10.1 |
| Pike | 977 | 10,859 | 9.0 |

| | | | |
|--------|-------|--------|------|
| Polk | 2,335 | 20,363 | 11.5 |
| Sevier | 1,269 | 16,297 | 7.8 |
| Union | 3,572 | 44,170 | 8.0 |

* These transportation costs reflect cost of fuel but do not include the costs of lodging, meals, or time off work.

Northeast Arkansas

More than 34,000 veterans reside in Northeast Arkansas. This area includes two Community-Based Outpatient Centers in Paragould and Jonesboro. Many of the veterans in this region of the state travel to the VA Medical Centers in Poplar Bluff, Mo., or Memphis to receive care.

For example, a veteran in Newport (Jackson County) travels 40 miles to receive care at the Jonesboro CBOC (\$11 roundtrip*). This veteran is more than 90 miles away from a VA Medical Center in Central Arkansas or Memphis (\$25 roundtrip*). This veteran used to receive \$22.80 to compensate for his travel to the Jonesboro Clinic and \$51.30 to compensate for his travel to Central Arkansas or Memphis. Under legislation supported by Senator Lincoln, a disabled veteran would receive \$33.20 in compensation for travel to Jonesboro and \$74.70 in compensation for travel to Central Arkansas or Memphis.

| County | Veteran Population | Total Population (2006 Census) | % of Population |
|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Clay | 1,572 | 16,497 | 9.5 |
| Craighead | 7,148 | 88,244 | 8.1 |
| Crittenden | 3,748 | 52,083 | 7.2 |
| Cross | 1,105 | 19,056 | 5.8 |
| Greene | 3,466 | 40,091 | 8.6 |
| Jackson | 1,099 | 17,426 | 6.3 |
| Lawrence | 1,485 | 16,899 | 8.9 |
| Mississippi | 3,399 | 47,517 | 7.2 |
| Poinsett | 2,227 | 25,086 | 8.9 |
| Randolph | 1,710 | 18,448 | 9.3 |
| White | 6,640 | 72,560 | 9.2 |
| Woodruff | 633 | 7,905 | 8.0 |

* These transportation costs reflect cost of fuel but do not include the costs of lodging, meals, or time off work.

North Central

Approximately 36,000 veterans live in Arkansas's North Central region. This area includes two Community-Based Outpatient Clinics in Harrison and Mountain Home. Veterans in this region may also travel to the Branson, Mo., Community-Based Outpatient Clinic to receive care.

For example, a veteran in Marshall (Searcy County) travels 40 miles to receive care at the Harrison CBOC (\$11 roundtrip*). This veteran is 85 miles away from a VA Medical Center in Fayetteville (\$25 roundtrip*). This veteran used to receive \$22.80 to compensate for his travel to the Harrison Clinic and \$48.45 to compensate for his travel to Fayetteville. Under legislation supported by Senator Lincoln, a disabled veteran would receive \$33.20 in compensation for travel to Harrison and \$70.55 in compensation for travel to Fayetteville.

| County | Veteran Population | Total Population (2006 Census) | % of Population |
|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Baxter | 6,164 | 41,307 | 14.9 |
| Boone | 3,964 | 36,405 | 10.9 |
| Cleburne | 3,937 | 25,485 | 15.4 |
| Fulton | 1,306 | 11,756 | 11.1 |
| Independence | 3,427 | 34,909 | 9.8 |
| Izard | 1,687 | 13,356 | 12.6 |
| Marion | 2,497 | 16,931 | 14.8 |
| Newton | 825 | 8,411 | 9.8 |
| Pope | 5,179 | 57,671 | 9.0 |
| Searcy | 915 | 8,075 | 11.3 |
| Sharp | 2,141 | 17,963 | 11.9 |
| Stone | 1,484 | 11,981 | 12.4 |
| Van Buren | 2,387 | 16,718 | 14.3 |

* These transportation costs reflect cost of fuel but do not include the costs of lodging, meals, or time off work.

Northwest Arkansas

Nearly 60,000 veterans reside in Northwest Arkansas. This area includes the VA Medical Center in Fayetteville that reported 4,250 admissions in 2008. There is also a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Fort Smith.

For example, a veteran in Van Buren (Crawford County) travels 10 miles to receive care at the Fort Smith CBOC. This veteran is 50 miles away from a VA Medical Center in Fayetteville (\$13 roundtrip*). This veteran used to receive \$28.50 to compensate for his travel to the Fayetteville Clinic. Under legislation supported by Senator Lincoln, a disabled veteran would receive \$41.50 in compensation for travel to Fayetteville.

| County | Veteran Population | Total Population (2006 Census) | % of Population |
|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Benton | 18,449 | 196,045 | 9.4 |
| Carroll | 2,605 | 27,339 | 9.5 |
| Crawford | 5,884 | 58,785 | 10.0 |

| | | | |
|------------|--------|---------|-----|
| Franklin | 1,771 | 18,276 | 9.7 |
| Johnson | 1,871 | 24,453 | 7.7 |
| Logan | 2,196 | 22,903 | 9.6 |
| Madison | 1,250 | 15,361 | 8.1 |
| Scott | 1,026 | 11,415 | 9.0 |
| Sebastian | 9,740 | 120,322 | 8.1 |
| Washington | 13,703 | 186,521 | 7.3 |
| Yell | 1,414 | 21,834 | 6.5 |

* These transportation costs reflect cost of fuel but do not include the costs of lodging, meals, or time off work.

- i Department of Veterans Affairs
- ii U.S. Census Bureau
- iii AAA Fuel Report
- iv Lincoln Staff calculations